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# Benedict's Transcultural View Beyond Orientalism

—An Inter/Cross-Cultural Lesson For The 21st Century—

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## INTRODUCTION

“Culture is personality writ large.” This is a key concept we can learn from the cultural insights of Ruth Benedict<sup>1)</sup> (1887-1948). Benedict presented what is called the “patterns of culture” through her comparative study of other cultures. The concept of cultural relativism,<sup>2)</sup> which claims the respect of the relative differences and values of each culture contributed greatly to intercultural understanding. This cultural relativism was for Benedict, as an anthropological folklorist, the arena of her public struggle against racism and xenophobia, and her internal struggle against American Orientalism<sup>3)</sup> and ethnocentrism.<sup>4)</sup> Benedict already realized that cultural relativity need not be an absolute philosophy (Benedict, 1934). The point is that even in the midst of the most charged years between Japan and the United States during the Pacific War, Benedict tried to describe Japanese people as fairly and objectively as possible without any biased notion of national character, bravely transcending the limits of individual cultures, and believing adamantly that cultural relativity is the prerequisite for intercultural understanding. It should be noted that Benedict's challenge to work on *The*

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1) Ruth Benedict (1887-1948), one of American's greatest anthropologists, was the first woman professor in the Anthropology department of Colombia University. She investigated how different people in different cultures could be and human behavior conditioned by each culture in terms of cultural relativism. She is well known for her book on comparative study of human culture: *Patterns of Cultures* (1934). During the Pacific War, she worked for the Office of War Information on occupied and enemy countries. It was while she was doing this war work that she went back to her earlier interest in the Japanese and produced the truly definitive study, *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword*.

2) Cultural Relativism is the anthropological attitude that society's customs and ideas should be described objectively and understood in the context of that society's problems and opportunities.

3) Orientalism is a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient. Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Random House Inc, 1978) 3.

4) Ethnocentrism is the belief that one's own race, nation, group, etc. is better and more important than others. *Longman Dictionary of English Language and Culture*. 1992.

*Chrysanthemum and the Sword*<sup>5)</sup> in the most difficult context has always implied the significance of the transcultural and transnational perspective to understand others. Going beyond a huge cultural wall between Japan and the United States, Benedict seemed to enter the transcendental world which might have a possibility of "The Transcultural Identity" as an inter/cross-cultural lesson. At the dawn of the 21st Century, we must go beyond the Orientalism/Occidentalism impasse to a more flexible and transcultural approach that acknowledges cultural relativism and humanitarianism, but does not make them a fetish.

## CULTURAL RELATIVISM

An awareness of the relativity of cultural values is the premise of an intercultural sensitivity based on humanism. Accepting relativities and divesting ourselves of traditional absolutes require a tough and objective mind in any academic discipline.

In general, cultural relativism is an anthropological and humanistic attitude that social manners and customs should be described objectively and understood from the perspective of their social and cultural context. This attitude tends to foster generosity, empathy and understanding toward other cultures, and can be seen as a reflection of humanism. Requiring diverse observations and a strenuous effort to examine the many possible explanations of cultures and peoples, the attitude of cultural relativism can be said to be objective and scientific. Carol Ember et al. state that cultural relativism is impeded by two different but commonly held attitude :

The first is the tendency toward negative evaluation, which usually results from ethnocentrism ; The second is the tendency toward positive evaluation, which often takes the form of a naive yearning for the simple life of the "noble savage."<sup>6)</sup>

Ethnocentrism usually opposes cultural relativism in that it prevents people from the understanding of the cultures of other people and, simultaneously blinds one to one's own culture. If people think that whatever they do is best, there will be no room for an awareness of relativity.

The components of Orientalism largely include the first negative evaluation of

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5) *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword* : Patterns of Japanese Culture (1946 ; Vermont : Charles E. Tuttle, 1974).

6) Carol Ember and Melvin Ember. *Anthropology* (New Jersey : Prentice Hall, 1990) 169.  
Noble savage means, in literature, an idealized concept of uncivilized man, who symbolizes the innate goodness of one not exposed to the corrupting influences of civilization. *Encyclopedia Britanica*. 1984

other cultures resulting from ethnocentrism. Therefore, cultural relativism and Orientalism can be seen as two extremes, two opposing views of humanity. For this reason, it can be meaningful and effective to examine the existence of cultural relativism in any literature with Orientalism in mind.

In summary, the basic criteria of cultural relativism can be described as follows: First, when researchers or observers try to understand and describe any cultural phenomena, they should try to avoid value judgments on their subject matter. They should free themselves from their own cultural norms. Secondly, the significance of any cultural phenomena should be evaluated within that society's context. Thirdly, there are no superior or inferior values among and between human cultures. As cultural relativism is a key concept in Benedict's professional life and her anthropological analysis, it is worth examining cultural relativism in Benedict's works in terms of these criteria.

## CULTURAL RELATIVISM IN BENEDICT

Benedict's cultural relativism is the prerequisite for her inter/cross-cultural understanding. Despite the difficult social context Benedict kept insisting her anthropological belief in her academia. In the beginning of this century, the false interpretation of evolutionism to justify European conquests of natives in the world and the colonialism symbolized by Orientalism was still epidemic. However, Benedict bravely stood up for cultural relativity, insisting that anthropology must prove that a variety of cultures in the world can't be evaluated in terms of Western-centered standard and value systems alone. Benedict tried not to observe cultural phenomena only on the base of Occidental assumptions, but to be more objective and more relative. This attitude of Benedict can be seen in *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword* as she wrote:

Certainly I found that once I had seen where my Occidental assumptions did not fit into their view of life and had got some idea of the categories and symbols they used, many contradictions Westerners are accustomed to see in Japanese behavior were no longer contradictions.<sup>7)</sup>

Benedict clarified incomprehensible Japanese behavior by showing the basic principles of behavior upon which it rested. She enabled Americans to observe the Japanese as "human" rather than as "barbarian" or "alien." She emphasized the significance of cultural diversity and pluralism, refusing absolute standards in

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7) Ruth Benedict, *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword: Patterns of Japanese Culture* (1946; Vermont: Charles E. Tuttle, 1974) 19.

evaluating culture. In *Patterns of Culture* (1934), she asserted cultural relativity as follows :

Social thinking at the present time has no more important task before it than that of taking adequate account of cultural relativity . . .

The recognition of cultural relativity carries with it its own values, which need not be those of the absolute philosophies.<sup>8)</sup>

To Benedict cultural relativity is the first priority in social thinking. She believes that many institutions formerly thought to be absolute had been shown to be relative. Benedict already realized that even cultural relativity can not be an absolute philosophy. She was sure that there are no perfect or absolute value in human societies. Virginia Briscoe emphasizes that cultural relativism pervades all of Benedict's work and she notes as follows :

Benedict's emphasis on the variety of cultural options and the patterns which express them—her cultural relativism—lies behind current strictures against ethnocentrism in folklore fieldwork and emphasis on emic ethnic analysis.<sup>9)</sup>

Helped by cultural diversity and ethnic pluralism in American society, Benedict's cultural relativism became the canon of American anthropological thought. On the basis of Benedict's cultural relativism to which she refers in forty five passages<sup>10)</sup> in *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword* and these critics' support to Benedict's cultural relativism, it can be said that Benedict is a quintessential representative of cultural relativism which is always looking for the "transcendental view"<sup>11)</sup> in cultural understanding of others.

## ORIENTALISM : WESTERN CONCEPTIONS OF THE ORIENT

Said's *Orientalism* can be a critical tool to examine the validity of all the literature on the East written by the Westerners. Influenced by the imperialism and colonialism of the 19th century, Western people became interested in the natives and the cultures of Western colonies. This led to the advent of

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8) Ruth Benedict, *Patterns of Culture* (1934 ; Boston, Houghton Mifflin Company, 1989) 278.

9) Virginia Briscoe, "Ruth Benedict Anthropological Folklorist," *Journal of American Folklore* Vol. 92 (1979) : 462.

10) Koji Nakamura : *Cultural Relativism and Orientalism in Benedict's The Chrysanthemum and the Sword*. M.A. thesis, Hyogo University of Teacher Education, 1994.

11) Transcendentalism is a philosophy that stresses a belief in transcendental things and the importance of spiritual rather than material existence. *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*. 1989.

anthropology as related to Darwinian Evolutionism<sup>12)</sup> and Hegelian Progressivism in *The Philosophy of History*.<sup>13)</sup> Exponents of evolutionism believed that culture generally develops and evolves from primitive stages into advanced ones. People who supported the Hegelian progressive view of history believed that history is not meaningless chance, but a rational process and transition from the ancient Oriental world through classical Greece and Rome and the Middle Ages to the modern German world. These people are supporters of a Western-centered linear theory of history and culture based on a developmental dialectic. This theory led to the Western-centered view of non-Western cultures as inferior to Western cultures. This view was to be criticized by Edward Said in his work on Orientalism in the late 20th century.

Said<sup>14)</sup> (1978) argued that European culture gained in strength and identity by setting itself off against the Orient as a sort of surrogate and even underground self, defining Orientalism as a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient. He presented the important hypothesis in his book, *Orientalism*, that without examining Orientalism as a discourse one cannot possibly understand the enormously systematic discipline by which European culture was able to manage—and even produce—the Orient (Said, 1978). This argument is quite important even today when people discuss intercultural relations between the West and the East. Said's Orientalism can be seen as one of the criteria for evaluating the validity of Western views of the East.

Now that Said has pointed out that what German Orientalism had in common with Anglo-French and later American Orientalism was a kind of intellectual authority over the Orient within Western culture, and that the American Oriental position since World War II has fitted, quite self-consciously, in the places excavated by the two earlier European powers (Said, 1978), it is worth examining Benedict's challenge to American Orientalism through her representation of Japanese culture. Through Benedict's challenge to go beyond

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12) Evolutionism is the prevailing theory in the early years of anthropology that culture generally develops or evolves in a uniform and progressive manner. Edward B. Tylor (1832-1917), an early evolutionist, maintained that culture evolved from the simple to the complex, and that all societies passed through three basic stages of development: from savagery through barbarism to civilization. Carol R. Ember and Melvin Ember. *Anthropology* (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1990) 186.

13) George Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *The Philosophy of History* Trans. J. Sibree (New York: Dover Publications, Inc, 1956).

14) Edward W. Said (1935), born in Jerusalem, is a Palestinian American. He was educated in Cairo and the U.S. and is the Old Dominion Foundation professor of the Humanities and Comparative Literature at Columbia university. He is a prolific writer on a wide range of topics including literature, music, cultural criticism and Palestinian issues.

American-centered conception of Japan, it might be possible to find out a key to an inter/cross-cultural lesson to peaceful coexistence of all humanity on this fragile earth today.

## **BENEDICT'S CHALLENGE TO ORIENTALISM**

The spirit of Benedict's cultural relativism is very much opposed to the idea of Orientalism. The contextual understanding of other cultures is the kernel of Benedict's cultural view. In the 1930s Benedict found herself at the cross-roads of evolutionism and progressivism. Despite the influence of European and American Orientalism, the theory of cultural relativism gradually formed an academic and ideological orientation in America. Benedict's theory of culture and personality is that there is a set of typical personality characteristics within each society. Her theory has brought forth a significant anthropological approach which has been applied to the study of complex societies.

In June 1944, Benedict was commissioned by the Office of War Information of the United States to study the basic cultural assumptions underlying Japanese behavior and their patterns of culture. She was asked to apply all her skills as an anthropologist to spell out what the Japanese were like. This was a really challenging assignment for a cultural anthropologist who stood by the spirit of cultural relativism in the midst of a dramatic history between Japan and the United States. As a result, Benedict successfully mapped out what makes the Japanese so uniquely Japanese as a suggestive guide for the American government, American citizens and global audience.

However, the following issues still remain to be examined in order to evaluate Benedict's significance for today's intercultural understanding between the West and the East: "How did Benedict get over the huge wall of intercultural misunderstanding present in the middle of the Pacific War through the conflict between the cause of cultural relativism and her sense of cultural identity as an American?"

In those days Japan's position in international society was the most impoverished and isolated in her history. Japan had no choice but to accept an unconditional surrender to the Allied Nations. The alternatives meant the prompt and utter destruction of Japan (The Potsdam Declaration,<sup>15)</sup> 1945). Moreover, as the Western atmosphere was filled with the strong sense of racial prejudice and animosity against Japanese, it was an almost impossible task to

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15) The Potsdam Proclamation, Article 13. July 26, 1945.

write a book of Japan from a relativistic point of view. Most Americans perceived the Japanese as the most alien, sneaky, and fanatical enemy that they had ever confronted. Benedict had to describe the behavior of Japanese people conditioned by Japanese culture as relatively, objectively and faithfully as possible as a scholar of cultural relativism. This required Benedict to have a determined, tough mind and a transcultural perspective to get over American Orientalism and all kinds of biased notions of what makes up the Japanese national character. This was really the most painful humanistic conflict between her cultural identity as an American citizen and the identity of scholar as a cultural relativist. Said (1981) emphasizes the following point :

Underlying every interpretation of other cultures is the choice facing the individual scholar or intellectual ; whether to put intellect at the service of power or at the service of criticism, communities, and moral sense.<sup>16)</sup>

To use Said's phrase, Benedict faces the conflict ; whether to put her intellect at the service of the American power as an Orientalist or at the service of an understanding of Japanese cultural identity as a relativist.

Benedict was a braver and more liberal scholar in those charged years than any other ethnocentric Orientalist. Even Geertz notes that Benedict's courage in writing about the Japanese a few years after Pearl Harbor has been at least occasionally remarked (Geertz, 1988).<sup>17)</sup>

Furthermore, there are a series of Benedict's public statements and actions which contradict the current view that Benedict wrote this book as a political and psychological war manual designed for the smooth occupation. In those days Benedict claimed the necessity of mutual cooperation between blacks and whites, argued for the rights of Japanese Americans on the West Coast, and emphasized the need of disarmament in academic conferences. Benedict's argument was for civil liberties and human rights. She consistently tried to defend the spirit of American democracy and the freedom of people. She refused to compromise her principles in any context. She dedicated herself to the protection of civil liberties.

Caffrey notes that Benedict warned the Americans of the necessity to protect civil liberties at home under the war-time temptation to push them aside, and that Americans would be no better than their enemies if they did not defend their civil liberties (Caffrey, 1989).<sup>18)</sup> Here people could share Benedict's strong conviction

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16) Edward Said, *Covering Islam* (New York : Pantheon Books, 1981) 164.

17) Clifford Geertz, *Works and Lives : The Anthropologist as Author* (California : Stanford University Press, 1988) 122.

18) Margaret Caffrey, *Ruth Benedict : Stranger in This Land* (Texas : University of Texas Press, 1989) 312.



about civil liberties, a conviction which never gave in, even in the face of American national power. Benedict's public struggle was to be against American national power for the sake of human rights and civil liberties. Benedict's internal struggle was to describe the culture of the enemy as relatively and objectively as possible with fairness. These struggles must be Benedict's challenge to American Orientalism as a humanist with cultural relativism in mind.

## THE SIGNIFICANCE OF BENEDICT'S CONFLICT

Conflict is a vital process in intercultural understanding. Almost half a century ago, in the midst of the war, Benedict had already encountered a crucial cultural theme: How should we go beyond the frame of an individual cultural identity so as to be engaged in a dialogue with other cultural identities? With this conflict in herself she tried to describe the Japanese as humanly as possible through the relativistic eyes of an insider and an outsider.

Examining *The Chrysanthemum and The Sword*, there are consistently forty five references to Benedict's cultural relativism, while there are only seven passages where Benedict speaks as an Orientalist. (Nakamura, 1994) One example is that Benedict strongly emphasized as follows: "Japan will have to rebuild her self-respect today on her own basis, not on ours. And she will have to purify it in her own way" (Benedict, 1946). This voice represents her spirit of cultural relativism and can be applied to any inter/cross-cultural context today. On the whole, suffering from the conflict of cultural identity, Benedict's cultural pendulum largely swings in the direction of cultural relativism. It is this divided consciousness of Benedict's conflict that an important key to intercultural understanding can be found.

An intercultural understanding without any conflict would be an illusion. A person without any cultural identity cannot fully understand other cultures. The more one tries to understand another culture as well as one's own, the more one has to go through a painful conflict. Geertz notes as follows:

Man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun, I take culture to be those webs. It is difficult for anyone to be totally free of the webs one has spun.<sup>19)</sup>

Women and men create culture, but it is also women and men who are conditioned by their culture. What is vital is one's humanistic conflict one has to experience when one tries to understand other peoples and cultures.

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19) Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., Publishers, 1973) 5.

Benedict's challenge and her significance lie in her determined fairness to describe other cultures, suffering from the cultural conflict in the extreme context between the two countries. She managed to describe the patterns of Japanese culture, applying her theory of culture and personality based on the philosophy of cultural relativism. Consequently, Benedict's masterpiece, *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword* became the first comprehensive account of Japanese culture. Even the right after the War, Kawashima admired Benedict as follows :

Among Japanese scholars, who on earth describe and analyze the American value system and culture without going to the United States ? . . . . Although this book was initially written for the purpose of the early defeat and smooth occupation of Japan, it is a book of limitless lessons for Japanese. One must not miss the difference between a country which forcefully compelled people to write biased facts for the good of its country and a country which steadily performed the scientific analysis of the enemy in terms of patterns of culture during the war.<sup>20)</sup>

This is the most positive evaluation of Benedict's work. What Kawashima points out here is worth considering in conjunction with today's intercultural understanding, and should be an eternal lesson for those Japanese people who are blinded by ethnocentrism and racism even today. The most impressive thing about what Benedict did is that Japanese culture, which seems inhuman, alien and incomprehensible to most Westerners, has been made to be clearer and more familiar to both Westerners and Japanese. This must be the result of Benedict's transcultural insights and awareness born from her cultural relativism.

Consequently this book could be viewed as a crystal mirror, reflecting the essence of American culture as well as that of Japanese one. It is this feature which has made this book timeless and a point of departure and arrival for intercultural understanding today.

## BENEDICT'S TRANSCULTURAL VIEW

It is Benedict's kind of conflict and her formidable tough mind to get over the cultural wall between her own culture and other cultures that enable us to understand different peoples and cultures. Benedict writes : "The tough-minded are content that differences should exist. They respect differences. Their goal is a world made safe for differences, where the United States may be American to the hilt without threatening the peace of the world . . . ." (Benedict, 1946).

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20) Kawashima Takenori, "What Benedict's *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword* Gives-Evaluation and Criticism," *Minzokugaku Kenkyu* 4-14 (1950) : 1.

When Benedict asserts that the tough-minded respect differences, she seems to believe in the "Transcendental self" of an outsider to whom every culture is alien. This transcendental attitude toward other cultures predicts the possibility of a "Meta-Cultural Person"<sup>21)</sup>, or a "Transcultural Identity"<sup>22)</sup> with reflexive consciousness that goes beyond the limits of individual cultures. As Edward Hall<sup>23)</sup> emphasizes, "The future depends on man's being able to transcend the limits of individual cultures."

From the very beginning of her career as an anthropologist, Benedict had a positive attitude to respect cultural differences as if they were differences in human personalities. As Benedict defines culture as "Personality writ large," it is not until one respects any other culture that one's intercultural sensitivity will develop. One cannot fully understand one's own culture without knowing other cultures and vice versa. Her transcendental attitude to different cultures brings home to us this reciprocal nature of intercultural understanding. From her tolerant and transcultural attitude toward far distant foreign cultures during the wars, one learns that the attitude to respect cultural differences is supported by the spirit of cultural relativism.

The most impressive lessons we gain from Benedict's efforts to explain the most alien and unfamiliar nature of Japanese people from her transcultural view are as follows. The first is that the Japanese dependence on hierarchy with a sense of obligation and harmony, and the American on egalitarianism with freedom are each cultural heritage which should be respected. The second is that there is nothing wrong with the Western logical consistency of their behavior and with the situational ethic of Japanese behavior, both of which are conditioned by each cultural system. The third is that one should know that the Western sense of "guilt" is inward-looking, whereas Japanese sense of "shame" is outward-looking. Each of these plays a large part in each other's patterns of thinking and behavior. These transcultural observations are the result of Benedict's cultural relativism.

Through her long period of internal cultural conflict between her philosophy of cultural relativism and her cultural identity as an American citizen, Benedict

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21) John Useem, Ruth Hill Useem and J. D. Donoghue, "Men in the Middle of the Third Culture: The Roles of American and Non-Western People in Cross-Cultural Administration", *Human Organization* Vol. 22 No. 3 (1963): 169-79

22) David B. Willis, "Mixed Cultures, Mono Cultures, Millennium Cultures: Transcultural Identity as a 21st Century Ideal?" Plenary Session No. 5: Education and the Fundamental Problems of Human Society. The 1993 Waseda International Symposium: Modernization and Educational Reforms, Tokyo, Japan, 1 June. 1993.

23) Edward T. Hall, *Beyond Culture* (New York: Anchor/Doubleday, 1976) 1-2.

could conclude as follows in her last chapter of *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword* :

What the United States cannot do—what no outside nation could do—is to create by fiat a free, democratic Japan. It has never worked in any dominated country. No foreigner can decree, for a people who have not his habits and assumptions, a manner of life after his own image.<sup>24)</sup>

Benedict had already predicted the transcultural and transnational perspectives that modernization doesn't necessarily mean Westernization in Euro/American-centrism. The spirit of Benedict's cultural relativism to transcend American Orientalism here must be the kernel of intercultural understanding today. This is Benedict's determined message born out of her faith in humanitarianism which has every chance to go beyond Orientalism or the impoverished shells of nationalistic and ethnocentric identity. The spirit of cultural relativism in turn is based on a strong sense of human solidarity with far distant foreign cultures and peoples, which reminds us that all of us have potential transcultural identity as citizens of the global village. As Willis emphasizes, transcultural and transnational people can encourage the significance of others as new brothers and sisters and they are more than simply in the world—they are with the world (Willis, 1993).

It's already a half century since Benedict tried to transcend the limits of individual cultures. Benedict's transcultural attitude as a cultural relativist is still alive under today's comparative scrutiny and this can be a kernel of cultural sensitivity for the inter/cross-cultural century we are on the verge of.

## BENEDICT'S SIGNIFICANCE FOR TODAY'S WORLD

Going beyond Orientalism and Occidentalism with Benedict's transcultural view will be an important assignment for the inter/cross-cultural lesson today. Human history has already seen endless conflicts between Orientalism and Occidentalism. History repeats itself and predicts the future. What happened between 1945 and 1995 will be of enormous importance for the future of humankind (McRae, 1994).<sup>25)</sup> In 1945 the United Nations determined to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, which twice in our life time has brought untold sorrow to mankind (The Charter of the U.N.). However, the threatening reality of all humanity today is that some 50,000-60,000 nuclear

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24) *The Chrysanthemum and the Sward: Patterns of Japanese Culture* (1946; Vermont: Charles E. Tuttle, 1974) 314.

25) McRae, Hamish. *The World in 2020: Power, Culture and Prosperity: A Vision of The Future*. (London: Haper Collins Publishers, 1994).

warheads have been produced since Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

In this age of the post-Cold War, we witness endless racial and religious conflicts, terrorism and human xenophobia largely influenced by the biased stereotypes and misunderstanding of each cultural system and cultural identity. Faced with these serious human conflicts in today's world, we cannot help thinking that the time has come again for us to go back to the philosophy of Benedict's cultural relativism searching for shared transcultural i go beyond the limits of individual cultures.

Nearly a half century ago, Benedict warned that one of the handicaps of the 20th century is that people still have the vaguest and most biased notions, not only of what makes Japan a nation of Japanese, but of what makes the United States a nation of Americans, France a nation of Frenchmen, and Russia a nation of Russians (Benedict, 1946). Today Alvin Toffler warns that the promise of the 21st Century will swiftly evaporate if we continue using the intellectual weapons of yesterday (Toffler, 1993).<sup>26)</sup>

Whether or not people will be able to coexist sharing common human transcultural identity, or whether or not people will continue racial, religious and economic confrontation endlessly, without knowing each other's cultural system, depends largely on a human education, especially transformative education for the fostering of a transcultural attitude based on the principle of cultural relativism. What is really vital is how to give transcultural interdependence (Willis, 1993) and symbiotic sharing more meaning in terms of cultural relativism, so that one can overcome one's biased concept of others, such as is expressed by the creeds of Orientalism, Occidentalism, Euro-centrism, ethnocentrism and xenophobia.

Taking into account today's international disputes and cultural confrontations between West and East, Benedict's relativistic attitude toward other cultures with transcultural view seems still to be a key to the closed door of intercultural understanding and still turns out to be a fresh approach to inter/cross cultural education for the succeeding generations of the world. There has been a long history of relation between East and West. Historically the West had the closed door of the East open by means of political and military power. The "open-door" policy worked so far. But now, the door of intercultural understanding must be opened on both sides by fostering a transcultural attitude born in cultural relativism through human education.

In today's international context, the answer to Orientalism is not Occidental-

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26) Toffler, Alvin, et al. *WAR and Anti-War : Survival at the Dawn of the 21st Century*. (London : Little, Brown and Company, 1993) 333.

ism. The answer to modernization is not westernization. Having Eastern-centered views of the West or, having Western-centered views of Orient will not be a solution. It is noteworthy that modernization and globalization do not mean westernization from the Eastern and African points of view (Mosa : 1996).<sup>27)</sup> The Japanese version of Orientalism in Asia is of course out of the question (Nakamura : 1994). The urgent task today is to take pains through cultural conflict to go beyond Orientalism and Occidentalism based on Benedict's cultural relativism and to look for transcultural identity, sharing transcultural similarities, so that we can live in a more safe and livable world at the dawn of the 21st Century. This is what Benedict wished to share with her fellow citizens on either side of the Pacific ocean in *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword* and will be a point of departure to create the transcultural world community.

## CONCLUSION

At the cross-cultural Century we are on the verge of, the great value of Benedict's transcultural perspective lies in her determined fairness to describe what makes the Japanese so uniquely Japanese, and to explain the most alien and paradoxical nature of contemporary Japan and Japanese. The timeless lesson we can learn from Benedict is her challenge to go beyond American Orientalism with her consistently relative and contextual understanding of far distant foreign cultures, suffering from the cultural conflict between her cultural relativism and her American cultural identity influenced by American Orientalism. We can conclude that Benedict is a cultural relativist as an American citizen who looked back forth, in her endless inquiry about genuine inter/cross cultural understanding with a "Transcendental-self."

At the dawn of the 21st Century, considering Benedict's warning of people's biased notion of others and other cultures, the future of humankind seems to depend largely on human education, especially transformative education to foster a transcultural/transnational perspective based on the principle of cultural relativism. Although the goal to the transformative education for transformative consciousness of the succeeding generation is still a long way off, human education must be a steady approach to go beyond Orientalism and Occidentalism.

People, living in an encapsulated conformity society with mono-culture, especially have to take pains to engender transcultural perspectives through

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27) Mosa, Ali. "Why Globalization?" Paper to the 9th World Congress of comparative Education. University of Sydney, 1996.

education. The ultimate purpose of such education for the next generation is an appreciation of and support for the fostering of "The transcultural/transnational Identity" on a world scale.

As long as human beings are human beings there is and will be a common human legacy and wisdom in Benedict's transcultural context. All humanity on this fragile earth must strive to build a larger moral community beyond culture, rather than jumping into the abyss of the cultural fault lines or battle lines in the name of the clash of civilizations. This is a new departure for human survival and peaceful coexistence for the next Century.

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